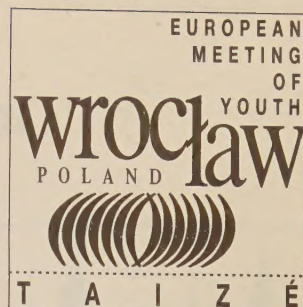


Letter from Taizé

BIMONTHLY 3.50 FF

June - July 1989 / 3



The next European meeting
will be held at the end of the year in **Poland**

MORE DETAILS IN THE NEXT LETTER

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Graduate Theological Union

JUL 12 1989

O Christ, we know by the Gospel that, risen from the dead, you dwell within all of us by your Holy Spirit. But often it is hard for us to understand that you are risen. It is as if we did not know it, or as if we had forgotten it.

And yet, from the depths of our human condition, we long for a love, the wonder of your love. Yes, in the depths of each one of us there is a yearning for your presence, for you, Christ, the one who loves us. This desire for your life in us is already a communion with you, the Risen Lord. This desire is already faith, a humble faith hidden within us.

If, in many of us, there are inner contradictions and resistances, you burn them away, Jesus, in the fire of your Holy Spirit.

And still more: you give us the audacity to leap over walls of hesitations, and even doubts, to be always united to you in the silence of our heart and to renew ceaselessly a yes of our whole existence.

O Christ, you have chosen us to transmit by our own lives a mystery of hope. In this way, day after day, with those whom you place on our road, we look forward to discovering in you, the Risen Christ, the source of a simple trust that makes of us people who are fully alive.

Going to the roots of an inner life, trust in God and the welcome of others

"I have the impression that young Europeans are allowing a gap to grow wider in their daily lives between their search for God and work or life in society. In Taizé, we become aware that this separation does not exist. How can we make it clear that the same thing can be true for us at home, even if the life of our society is far from the values of the Gospel?" This remark by a young Indian reflects one of the questions dealt with in the intercontinental meetings. This year, the reflection on the Letter from Russia on the theme "making the earth a place fit to live in" will enable us to share the answers to this question which each of us are trying to live out.

By participating three times each day in the community's worship, those who spend a week in Taizé are able to deepen an experience of prayer. The week is thus an occasion to discover a longing present in the depths of our being which has already set us on the road, making us take the risk of an encounter. It is also an occasion to try and welcome into our lives the gift of God, for example by reflecting on this question: "How can I find peace of heart?" or "How can I surrender to God what worries me about myself?"

A week in Taizé is also a time for discovering trust in God through Bible meditations, given by brothers who

suggest a theme each morning, a basis for personal reflection and small-group sharing.

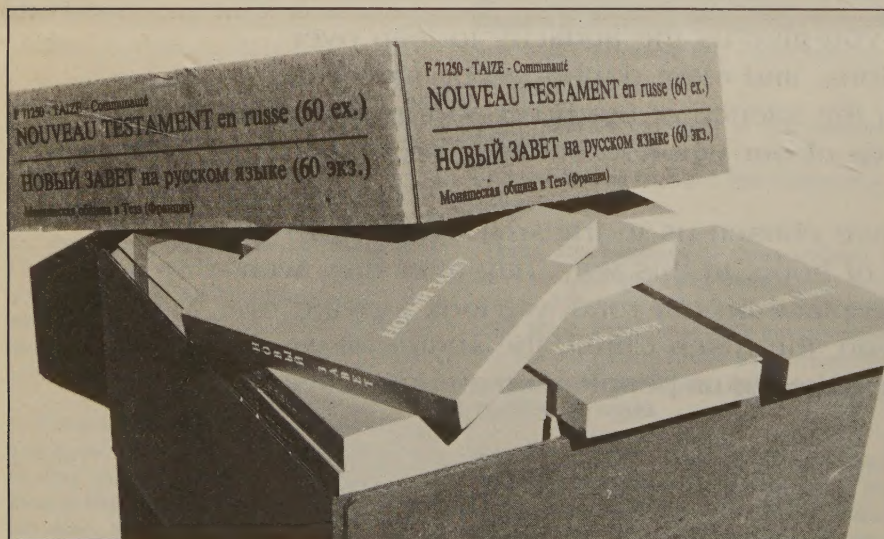
For the last two years in Taizé, young adults from other continents have been more numerous than ever before. Letting ourselves be welcomed by them is a way to discover the human riches of other peoples, cultures and traditions, and other facets of the life of the Church throughout the world. It also means letting ourselves be challenged by those who are familiar with critical situations in the human family: great poverty, dictatorships, natural disasters, civil wars, the persecution of believers...

This reflection wants above all to be a way of preparing us to continue, when we have returned home, to allow trust to grow up with those around us. "For example," said a young European, "with foreigners who are so often looked down upon or discriminated against where I live, whereas here I have discovered that people from other lands are a gift to be welcomed with joy." The experience is likewise a preparation for taking part in the common creation of a springtime of a Church which is close to all, and especially to the poorest.

Practical information: page 7

A million NEW TESTAMENTS in Russia

At Easter, the nine lorries loaded with New Testaments in Russian arrived at their destination, in the cities of Moscow, Kiev, Leningrad and Minsk.



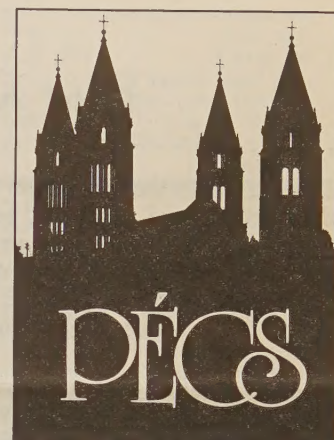
Contributions are still welcome from everyone to help with the sending of these one million New Testaments. All the costs have not yet been covered.

At the end of November, Patriarch Pimen of Moscow, head of the Russian Orthodox Church, sent the following telegram to Taizé: "We accept with gratitude the gift of New Testaments which you proposed on the occasion of the thousand year celebrations of the Russian Orthodox Church." In June, Brother Roger was invited to attend these celebrations and he offered to look for ways to have one million New Testaments printed in Russian. One million paperback copies of the New Testament have therefore been printed in France, in the Russian Millennium Version. Each copy costs 25p GB or 30p IRL or 45 cents US or 50 cents Canadian. They will be distributed free of charge to Russian Christians.

Contributions can be sent to:
UK: "Operation Hope", Bank Account no. 44495090, Coutts and Co., Duncannon Branch, 440 Strand, LONDON WC2R 0QS. ☉ USA: "Operation Hope", c/o Taizé, 413 W. 48th St., New York NY 10036. ☉ IRELAND, CANADA, AUSTRALIA, NEW ZEALAND, SOUTH AFRICA, etc.: gifts can be sent in the same way as sums for subscriptions to the Letter from Taizé, making sure to indicate with your payment "for Operation Hope".

Moving forward together

As this Letter from Taizé is going to press, the meeting in Pécs is about to begin. Some 15,000 participants are expected.



"This is the first time such a meeting has taken place here," said the Hungarians. "It is exciting to discover the situation of Hungarians and other young Eastern Europeans," said one of the young participants in a preparation meeting held in a country in Western Europe. And he added: "We cannot go forward without them."

A few days before the meeting took place, those preparing it wrote a letter which began in this way: "It seems that the 13,000 places in the three places of prayer will not be enough. Many people are expected from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Italy, East and West Germany, Austria, France and even from European countries that are further away. The Hungarians organized groups to make the journey together, often in their parishes, and others will take a special train from Budapest.

The cathedral of Pécs, another church and a covered stadium have been linked by telephone wires for the times of common prayer. The civil authorities of the city have done much to ensure that things go smoothly: a school and a youth home have been offered for the central welcome, high schools for places to sleep, parking lots... The high schools will in fact only be used for sleeping if necessary, since a great many families have offered accommodations, in the city as well as in the surrounding area. The parishes of the different denominations present in Pécs have prepared the welcome: Catholic, Reformed, Lutheran, Baptist and even the tiny Methodist congregation.

The period of preparation was an intense time for the Church of Pécs. The young people, who were in the habit of meeting in one or two parishes of the city in order to be together, split up into smaller groups to assist with the preparation in all the parishes. They began to lead regular prayers with the participation of other parish members, the priest or the minister. This is already something quite new in their situation where, until just recently, parish activity was limited to Sunday worship. In the past few years, the young people had formed groups for prayer and sharing. The fact that they are now helping with parish life is a step forward.

Twice a week, during the entire time of preparation, they even went into the villages, where often only elderly people are left. To find accommodations in families, they went from door to door; some families, who only come to church once a year, will offer hospitality to one or two participants. This impressive preparation was backed up by a daily prayer in a central church of the city, a former mosque.

In this way, we discovered two different faces of the Church: on the one hand old people, who so often are witnesses to Christ's faithfulness. In spite of trials, they have remained faithful, attached to the promises of the Beatitudes. On the other hand the young; even if there are not many of them, they are searching for new expressions of the life of communion of the Church. Over the past few decades, the parish structure made possible a continuity of the faith. And now there is a breath of fresh air that comes from the small groups of young people and their concern to broaden parish life in the direction of community life and mutual support.

The Hungarians are thankful that they are the ones who can welcome others now. For them it is a confirmation, an encouragement to find a way forward in their own situation. The European meeting will be an opportunity to journey along with them in their country for a short while.

The meeting itself will take place in Pécs, but it will continue on May 1st in Budapest with two prayer celebrations, one in a Protestant church and the other in the Catholic cathedral. ■

"Lord, teach us to pray"

Here is the continuation of the first two texts published to summarize the Bible introductions on the Lord's Prayer given last summer in Taizé.

"Your Kingdom come"

This petition of the Our Father deals with the same reality as the preceding one, "hallowed be your Name", but from a different angle. It is not enough to know God's true identity; we also have to base our lives on that knowledge. A text from the book of Isaiah can help us see the unity between these two images of the Name and the Kingdom:

"And now what have I here? declares the Lord. For my people have been taken away for nothing, and those who rule them mock. All day long my Name is constantly blasphemed. Therefore my people will know my Name; therefore in that day they will know that it is I who foretold it. Yes, it is I. How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion: Your God reigns!" (Isa 52,5-7)

First, God recalls that his Name has been profaned because of the miserable state of the people in exile, but that he will soon take things in hand: "my people will know my Name". This is an announcement of salvation to come, and the following verse explains this salvation using another image: it will be a time of peace and happiness, summed up in the cry "Your God reigns!" It is understandable, then, that in Jewish tradition the time of salvation came to be known as "the Kingdom (or Reign or Rule) of God", and that the Gospel writers referred to this verse (Isaiah 52,7) to describe the coming of Jesus Christ and his "good news" that the Reign of God was at hand (cf. Mark 1,14-15).

Another text from Isaiah (2,2-4) describes this Reign. The prophet communicates his vision of a future day when all nations will come up to Jerusalem to receive God's teaching, to learn to walk in God's ways. A time of peace and justice for the whole world will follow, a consequence of the fact that all will see God as their guide and the one who settles their disputes. The Kingdom of God is thus shown to be a new world order, open to all, which follows from the knowledge of God and his ways.

But how can such a beautiful vision become reality? The Jews of those days had different views about this. For some, it could only be the work of God alone; all that human beings could do would be to wait expectantly and pray for the coming of God's Reign. On the other extreme, some saw the coming of the Kingdom as the consequence of a political revolution: the important thing was to take up arms and chase the enemies of Israel out of the Promised Land. This they saw more or less as a way of forcing God's hand, of obliging him to act on behalf of his people. Between these two extremes, there was certainly a whole gamut of opinions.

There were also those who believed that the way to hasten the coming of the Kingdom was to begin right away to live out, in the concrete circumstances of one's own life, God's Law in all of its aspects. This was the attitude of the Pharisees who, in some respects, were not far from Jesus' own way of looking at things.

Jesus, for his part, took the image of the Kingdom as the centre of his message, while transforming it in the process. To express his own understanding of it in all its newness, he usually spoke of it using concrete images, parables. Let us look at some of its basic characteristics.

First of all, for Jesus, the Kingdom of God can never come about as a result of human violence. It has nothing to do with an extreme form of nationalism, a victory for some and a defeat for others.

Second, in Jesus' eyes, the Kingdom always has a universal outlook: it is like a tree in which all the birds of the air find rest (Luke 13,19), a net that catches "all kinds of things" (Matt 13,47). It is a reality open to all.

A third characteristic of the Kingdom proclaimed by Jesus is perhaps the most original of all. For him, the Kingdom is the object of an ardent longing, a future reality that the Father will bring about at a time and by ways known to him alone. It is, at the same time, a reality which in some sense has already begun with the coming of Jesus.

To express this apparent paradox, Jesus uses images like the tiny seed that becomes a large tree and the yeast that raises the whole loaf (Matt 13,31-33). The reality of the Kingdom is already at work, although in a hidden, mysterious manner; it requires a commitment of one's entire being, a conversion of heart. That explains the urgency of Jesus' call, for in fact the hour of God is already at hand.

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Meditating on the Word

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

July

One day or another, every human being asks themselves the question "Who am I?" Knowing oneself is one of the deepest aspirations of the human heart. And since faith never takes us out of the human condition, believers are not exempt from such questioning. But what is dangerous in this search for one's own identity are answers that imprison us and keep us from growing, answers that inhibit a possible transfiguration of what we are.

In order to know ourselves, Saint John invites us to turn our eyes toward God. He is aware of the difficulty many Christians have in discovering the beauty of their lives because those around them constantly misunderstand what they are all about. He writes: "The world does not know us." And since we are all sensitive to the opinions others have of us, our self-esteem is necessarily affected when we are misunderstood, when our intentions are distorted.

Fixing our eyes on the love God gives us in his constant presence and forgiveness is what helps us to understand who we are: God's beloved children in the same way that Christ is God's beloved Son. But what can we do when the disparity between what we know from Christ and what we discover in our own lives seems insurmountable? There is only one way that brings us into a unity of life with Christ. That road is trusting that we are already what we shall one day be, even though it is not yet visible. There is nothing we can do to make ourselves similar to Christ. But whoever concentrates on the love God has for them and believes that that is what they already are, becomes it for sure (in v. 3, "hope" does not mean "uncertainty", but rather confidence turned toward the future).

What helps me not to become paralyzed by judgements or criticisms that others (or that I myself) make about me?

What changes occur in me when I live in the confidence that, in a hidden way, I already am what I shall one day be in the light of Christ?

1 Sat Is 40. 25-28
Jude 20-21, 24-25

Jesus said: My sheep listen to my voice. I give them eternal life and they will never be lost. No one snatch anything out of the Father's hand. **Jn 10. 22-30**

2 SUN 1 K 19. 16,19-21
Ga 5. 1,13-18

Someone said to Jesus, "I will follow you wherever you go." Jesus answered, "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head." **Lk 9. 51-62**

3 Mon Ep 2. 19-22
Jn 20. 24-29

St THOMAS
Jesus, risen from the dead, said to his disciples: You will receive the power of the Holy Spirit, and you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth. **Ac 1. 6-8**

4 Tue Jn 11. 1-16
Is 41. 8-10

Peter said: I now really understand that God has no favourites, but that in every nation he loves those who revere him and act justly. **Ac 10. 24-28,34-35**

5 Wed Is 41. 17-20
Ac 10. 36-43

Jesus said to Martha: I am the resurrection. The one who believes in me shall live, even though he dies. And whoever lives and believes in me shall never die. **Jn 11. 17-27**

6 Thu Ac 10. 44-48 Jn 11. 28-44
Is 42. 1-4

May my name be set on your heart, my love is a fire. **Sg 8. 6**

7 Fri Ac 11. 3,15-18
Jn 11. 45-53

Wayfarer though I am on the earth, do not hide your will from me, my soul is consumed with longing for it. **Ps 119. 17-20,24**

8 Sat Ac 11. 19-21
Jn 11. 55-57

The Lord says to his servant: I have called you in righteousness. I will take take you by the hand and shape you. I will make you a light to the nations. **Is 42. 5-7**

9 SUN Is 66. 10-14
Ga 6. 14-18

Jesus said: The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. So pray that the Lord of the harvest may send out workers into his harvest. **Lk 10. 1-12**

10 Mon Is 42. 10a,16
Jn 12. 1-8

Through Christ, forgiveness of sins is offered to everyone who believes. **Ac 13. 33,38-39**

11 Tue Ac 13. 44-49
Jn 12. 12-19

The Lord says: You are precious in my eyes, I value you and I love you. **Is 43. 1-4a**

12 Wed Is 43. 10-13
Ac 14. 19-23

Jesus said: In truth, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies it remains only a single grain. But if it dies it yields a big harvest. **Jn 12. 20-25**

13 Thu Is 43. 18-20
Ac 15. 7-12

Jesus said: Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant will also be. **Jn 12. 26-32**

14 Fri Ac 15. 13-18
Jn 12. 33-36

I run in the path of your will, for you have set my heart free. **Ps 119. 28-30,32**

15 Sat Ac 16. 9-15
Jn 12. 37-43

The Lord says: Do not be afraid, my servant whom I have chosen. I shall pour out my Spirit on your offspring. **Is 44. 1-3**

16 SUN Dt 30. 10-14
Col 1. 15-20

Having told the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus asked the teacher of the law, "Who showed themselves to be a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" He replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." **Lk 10. 25-37**

17 Mon Is 44. 6-8
Jn 12. 44-47

Life itself became visible, we saw it and testify to it. We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was revealed to us. **1 Jn 1. 1-4**

18 Tue Is 44. 21-23
1 Jn 1. 5-7

Jesus said: The Father who sent me commanded me what to say and what to make known, and I know that his commands lead to eternal life. **Jn 12. 48-50**

19 Wed Jn 13. 16-20
1 Jn 1. 8-9

The Lord says: Though you did not know me, I have called you by your name. **Is 45. 2-4**

20 Thu Is 45. 8,15
1 Jn 2. 1-2

Jesus said: Love one another just as I have loved you. By this, everyone will recognize you as my disciples. **Jn 13. 31-35**

21 Fri Jn 16. 5-7
1 Jn 2. 3-8

Turn my heart toward your way, and not to selfish gain. Turn my eyes away from worthless things, by your word give me life. **Ps 119. 33-37**

22 Sat Is 45. 18-19
1 Jn 2. 9-11

The Risen Christ said to Mary of Magdala: Go and find my brothers and tell them: I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God. **Jn 20. 1,11-18**

23 SUN Gn 18. 1-10a
Col 1. 24-28

Jesus said to Martha: You are worried and upset about many things, and yet few are needed, indeed only one. **Lk 10. 38-42**

24 Mon Is 45. 22-24a
Jn 17. 1-3

The world will pass away, but the one who does the will of God will remain for ever. **1 Jn 2. 12-17**

25 Tue Ws 1. 1-2
2 Co 4. 7-12

St JAMES
Jesus said: Anyone who wants to be great among you must be your servant. **Mt 20. 20-28**

26 Wed Is 48. 3,6-10
1 Jn 2. 27b-29

Jesus prayed to his Father for his disciples, saying: Keep those you have given me true to your name, so that they may be one as we are one. **Jn 17. 9-12a**

27 Thu Is 48. 16-19a
Jn 17. 13-17

How great a love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called God's children. And that is what we are! **1 Jn 3. 1-3**

28 Fri Ps 119. 41,44-48
Jn 17. 18-21

John writes: We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers. **1 Jn 3. 11,13-14a**

29 Sat 1 Jn 3. 16-18
Jn 17. 22-26

Announce this with shouts of joy and proclaim it to the ends of the earth: the Lord has redeemed his servant. **Is 48. 20b-21**

30 SUN Gn 18. 20-32
Col 2. 12-14

Jesus said: Ask, and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. **Lk 11. 1-13**

31 Mon Is 49. 1,3-4
1 Jn 3. 19-24

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. **Mk 1. 1-5**

These short readings, taken from the midday prayer in Taizé, can be read several times during the day. The references indicate longer readings. If you have time to read only one, the one in bold type is suggested.

1 Tue Is 49. 5-7
1 Jn 4. 1-4
John the Baptist said: After me will come one more powerful than I. I baptise you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.
Mk 1. 6-8

2 Wed Is 49. 8-10
1 Jn 4. 7-9
At Jesus' baptism, a voice came from heaven saying, "You are my Son, the Beloved; my joy is in you."
Mk 1. 9-13

3 Thu Is 49. 13-15
Mk 1. 14-15
This is love: not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son for the forgiveness of our sins.
1 Jn 4. 10-12

4 Fri 1 Jn 4. 13-16
Mk 1. 16-20
Your will is a song for me. In the night I remember your name, Lord.
Ps 119. 54-56

5 Sat Mk 1. 21-28
1 Jn 4. 17-21
The Lord says: You will know that I am the Lord. Those who hope in me will not be disappointed.
Is 49. 18-23

6 SUN Dn 7. 9-14
2 P 1. 16-19
TRANSFIGURATION
Jesus took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the appearance of his face changed. Then a cloud enveloped them, and a voice came from the cloud saying: This is my Son, the Chosen One; listen to him.
Lk 9. 28-36

7 Mon 1 Jn 5. 1-4
Mk 1. 32-39
God wakens my ear every morning to listen as a disciple.
Is 50. 4-7

8 Tue Is 50. 8-10
Mk 2. 1-12
God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.
1 Jn 5. 5, 6, 9-11

9 Wed 1 Jn 5. 13-15
Mk 2. 13-14
The Lord says: My justice will become a light to the nations. My salvation is on the way and all peoples will put their hope in me.
Is 51. 4-5

10 Thu Is 51. 6b-7, 11
1 Jn 5. 19-20
Jesus said: I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.
Mk 2. 15-17

11 Fri Ps 119. 57-59, 62-64
Mk 2. 18-22
God chose us in Christ, before the world was made, to be holy and faultless before him in love.
Ep 1. 1-6

12 Sat Is 51. 12-16
Mk 2. 23-27
Through the giving of the life of Christ we gain our freedom, the forgiveness of sins. Such is the richness of God's grace.
Ep 1. 7-10

13 SUN Ws 18. 6-9
Heb 11. 1-2, 8-19
Jesus said to his disciples: Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the Kingdom.
Lk 12. 32-40

14 Mon Ep 1. 11-14
Mk 3. 1-6
All the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.
Is 52. 7-10

15 Tue Zp 3. 14-18a
1 Co 15. 20-26
THE VIRGIN MARY
I exult for joy in the Lord, my soul rejoices in my God, for he has clothed me in garments of salvation and wrapped me in a mantle of innocence.
Is 61. 10

16 Wed Ep 1. 20-23
Mk 3. 22-27
The servant of the Lord bore our suffering. We have been healed by his wounds.
Is 53. 1-5

17 Thu Is 53. 6-9
Mk 3. 31-35
God is rich in merciful love. Because of the great love he has for us, he has brought us to life with Christ.
Ep 2. 4-6

18 Fri Ep 2. 7-10
Mk 4. 1-9
My soul is eager for you, for your Word is my hope.
Ps 119. 81-82, 86-87

19 Sat Ep 2. 12-13
Mk 4. 13-20
The will of the Lord will be accomplished through his servant. After all his suffering, he will see the light and be satisfied.
Is 53. 10-12

20 SUN Jr 20. 10-13
Heb 12. 1-4
Jesus said: Whoever wants to be a follower of mine must renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me.
Lk 9. 22-25

21 Mon Is 54. 1-6a
Mk 4. 21-24
Christ is our peace. He has broken down the dividing wall of hostility between the peoples and reconciled them to God, through the cross. In his own person, he has destroyed hatred.
Ep 2. 14-18

Meditating on the Word

22 Tue Is 54. 7-8, 10
Ep 2. 19-22
Jesus said: The kingdom of God is like this: A man scatters seed on the land. Night and day, whether he is awake or asleep, the seed sprouts and grows, he knows not how.
Mk 4. 26-29

23 Wed Is 54. 11a, 13-14
Mk 4. 30-34
The mystery of Christ is that all peoples now share the same inheritance, being members of one body, and having received the same promise in Christ Jesus, through the Gospel.
Ep 3. 2-6

24 Thu Is 55. 1-3a
Ep 3. 7-13
Jesus said to the man he had healed: Go home to your people and tell them everything the Lord has done for you in his mercy.
Mk 5. 18-20

25 Fri Ps 119. 92-94
Mk 5. 21-24, 35-43
May God strengthen you in your inner being through his Spirit, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.
Ep 3. 14-19

26 Sat Mk 5. 25-34
Ep 4. 1-6
Seek the Lord while he is near. Turn to our God, he pardons freely.
Is 55. 6-7

27 SUN Is 66. 18-21
Heb 12. 5-7, 11-13
In one of Jesus' parables, the master says to his servant: Go out quickly into the streets of the town and bring in here the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame. Press people to come in so that my house be full.
Lk 14. 15-24

28 Mon Is 55. 8-9
Mk 6. 1, 6b-13
Draw your strength from God's power. Clothe yourself with the armour of God so that you can resist the tactics of the spirit of evil.
Ep 6. 10-13

29 Tue Ep 6. 18-20
Mk 6. 30-34
The Lord says: As the rain and the snow come down from the sky and do not return before having watered the earth and made it fertile, so is it with the word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me before having achieved its purpose.
Is 55. 10-11

30 Wed Is 55. 12-13
Mk 6. 35-44
Just as the sufferings of Christ overflow into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.
2 Co 1. 1-5

31 Thu 2 Co 1. 6-7
Mk 7. 31-37
The Lord says: Do what is right and act with justice, for my salvation is close at hand and my deliverance will soon be revealed.
Is 56. 1, 6-7

Johannine hours

Ephesians 4, 1-6

Johannine hours are suggested as a way of seeking God in silence and prayer, in the midst of our life at home. During the course of the day (if possible, two days in the same week) take a couple of hours to read the Bible passage with the short commentary and to reflect on the questions which follow. Afterwards, the group (3 to 10 people) meet together to share what they have discovered and perhaps for a time of prayer.

All who call themselves Christians live not by themselves but by a call. Those who bear the name of Christ do not live lives focussed on themselves but on the One who has taken on himself all that divides, all that separates people from God and from one another. Living by that call, says the apostle Paul, means "bearing with one another in love".

In the human heart there is a seed of disunion which causes us often to try and find our own identity by opposition to others. Sometimes we try to affirm our own worth by holding ourselves apart from those whose imperfections we discern. Bearing with one another in love means acting in the opposite way: it means, as followers of Christ, placing ourselves in the other's shoes, and thus bearing the other's burden. Being weak with other people's weakness, being happy with their joy—and discovering with astonishment that we find our identity as unique and irreplaceable persons not by opposition but by communion.

"There is one Spirit": that becomes the source of a great peace. Even when oppositions seem to be insurmountable, Saint Paul urges those who live by Christ's call to hold fast to the confidence that the same Spirit of Christ dwells within the hearts of all believers, from the least to the greatest. And that in the hearts of all, Christ inspires the same hope for his Church, since he cannot be in contradiction with himself.

According to this text, what builds up communion? How can we keep our hearts at peace in the face of harsh oppositions?



Listening to the CONTINENTS

Madras

Upon returning from the Asian meeting in Madras: "Here are a few images of what I experienced in India. «If a trusting heart were at the beginning of everything...» These words accompanied me throughout my entire pilgrimage. For example, one evening I arrived in Kilpauk in a «new family» that was quite poor. Everyone was waiting for me and made a great though discreet effort to welcome me, not as another mouth to feed, but like a child who returns home and for whom there is a celebration. A Hindu neighbour, seeing that his friend had a guest, arrived with a blanket «in case the winter was too cold for me»! How can one not be amazed at all this kind attention? A spirit of wonder was given to me in India, and it is still alive within me. Other experiences of meeting also had a great impact on me, but the one that touched me most deeply was my visit to a community of Mother Teresa's sisters in Bombay. We simply wanted, in the spirit of the pilgrimage of trust, to wish a merry Christmas to those who were ill. When we entered the huge dormitories where so many women, men and children wounded by life live, I asked myself: where can I find the wellspring from which to draw the strength to go towards each one of them without shutting my eyes, remaining open and welcoming? I discovered it in the mysterious presence of a love given and received. We simply went from bed to bed, saying a few words when possible, but most often just smiling or exchanging a look. In taking someone's hand, letting them caress my face, being hugged by their weak arms, I felt that I was enabled to touch the source of loving. I sensed a painful appeal, a kind of lament, but with no sadness, marked rather by a fullness. This experience was only a small part of my pilgrimage in India, but it enlightened me, just as it now enlightens my work with children."

Zaire

"In Africa the street plays an important role in the life of the young. Outside the family and the school, it is a place where things grow up spontaneously, a place of experiences and encounters. In a public square or underneath the «palaver tree», young people acquire new experiences that correspond to the traditional rites of initiation.

But at Kinshasa, as in the other large cities of the Southern continents, the street is also the place where a drama is played out. It is the home of abandoned children. Poverty, family conflicts and social uprooting have caused them to leave home. With no adults to watch over them or support them, the street becomes their territory. They live one day at a time. Some earn a little money by selling newspapers, keeping an eye on people's cars, carrying their packages, shining shoes or more often than not by begging or stealing. But nostalgia for a home of their own, the insecurity of life on the street, violence and illness, hunger and cold quickly lead them to drugs or alcohol. They thus flee further away from a world that has rejected them.

Everything began for us eight years ago when, one evening, a group of thirty children from the streets came to ask if they could spend the night in our parish. Until then, they had been sleeping on a large staircase in our district.

One night, then two, turned into weeks, months and years... At first the children and the adolescents only spent the night in the parish. They came about 6 pm, slept outdoors on a basketball court and left at 5 am for the marketplace and their makeshift occupations. The first few days everything went well, but soon the parish priest realized that a minimum of organization was necessary for these youngsters.

They began to smoke hemp, at first secretly but then more and more openly. At night fights broke out and left razor or glass wounds that had to be taken care of in the morning. Then others went out at night to rob neighbours of the parish. Some decisions had to be made quickly: some young people of the parish volunteered to sleep outdoors with them to prevent fights from breaking out. Then, those who wanted to spend the night there had to agree to come every evening without exception and not to leave between 6 pm and 5 am.

But they continued to steal at the market and our parish priest often had to go to the police station to report on the behaviour of the youngsters he had welcomed to the parish.

Perhaps on account of all these discussions, the youngsters themselves realized that things could not go on like that much longer. One day they expressed the desire to go to school and to learn a trade. The idea came from them.

At the beginning of the next semester, all were enrolled in a school. The youngest went to a primary school, the older ones to a centre for learning a trade or profession.

Two years later, a donation enabled us to buy a house next door to the parish. Since then we have had to rent another house to welcome a growing number of youngsters. Today, eight of us help with the lodging and education of 72 youngsters between 7 and 22 years old. Since some of them have serious problems, someone has to be present day and night. Five of these youngsters have finished their professional training and have found work in local businesses. They have left the house and are living on their own.

The families of the parish have agreed to support the project. They invite the youngsters to spend Sundays with them. In this way they can find a family atmosphere and a little of the affection lacking in their life. But the parish community also supports the project financially. Since the needs are growing, we have had to look for other ways to find help.

Since their arrival in the parish, the youngsters have changed completely. Some are even doing very well in school, which astonishes those who find out about their background. This change is a result of their being in school, the daily contact with teachers and other students, their participation in youth activities in the parish as well as the tasks entrusted to them in the church. But I think that the main thing that has changed them is the love and affection we have shown them. They have discovered that they matter to the Christian community."

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